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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 THE HAGUE 001919

SIPDIS

NOFORN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/28/2014

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [TK](#) [NL](#) [EUN](#)

SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/EU/TURKEY: MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

REF: USEU 3226

Classified By: A...

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 THE HAGUE 001919

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SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/EU/TURKEY: MOVING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

REF: USEU 3226

Classified By: Amb. Clifford Sobel for reasons 1.4(B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (C/NF) SUMMARY: According to Dutch sources, the European Council will most likely decide in December to open accession talks with Turkey, setting a fixed starting date contingent on Turkey's completion of specific concrete reforms. Senior Dutch officials based in The Hague are playing an active role in guiding the drafting of the European Commission's October report. In this poker game, the Government of Cyprus remains one possible wild card. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C/NF) In recent discussions with Ambassador Sobel, Rob Swartbol (PM Balkenende's senior foreign policy advisor) has given clear indications that the Dutch are seeking to guide the EU toward a positive (albeit conditional) decision to begin accession talks with Turkey. In separate discussions following EUR DAS Laura Kennedy's meetings in Brussels (reftel), Poloff received similar signals from Pieter de Gooijer, Dutch MFA rep for European Integration (please protect), and Hannie Pollmann-Zaal.

YES TO TURKEY...

[1](#)3. (C/NF) On July 29, Swartbol told Ambassador Sobel that he believed the EU could set an October, 2005 date for opening accession talks with Turkey. He asserted that nearly all EU member states recognized that Turkey would receive a yes decision from the EU, although some still hoped to push the date for starting talks back one or two years; this, however, would be a mistake, he said. Swartbol predicted actual accession negotiations from 6 to 8 years plus two and suggested that -- contrary to usual practice -- the EU would probably try to address some of the toughest issues (like immigration) early in the process rather than waiting until the end. Swartbol said that the EU would be careful not to talk about a 10-year process publicly in deference to Turkish sensitivities.

[1](#)4. (C/NF) Swartbol revealed that the Turks had been consulted about the proposed conditions and timetable described above, but they had not yet agreed. Several EU members also remained unconvinced. EU Commissioner Verheugen, he said, would go to Turkey in September to try to gain Turkish support for the EC report.

...WITH QUALIFICATIONS

[1](#)5. (C/NF) Swartbol and de Gooijer confirmed that most EU Members assume the Commission will appraise Turkey's success

with the Copenhagen Criteria as virtually, almost, or just about. It is impossible to imagine a no, de Gooijer said. The Dutch cannot imagine an unqualified yes, either, listing outstanding issues such as judges' behavior, concerns about torture, access of Kurds to Kurdish language education, free exercise of religion, and the role of the military.

16. (C/NF) The question remains what the Council will do with these areas of improvement. The Dutch anticipate the EU Yes will come with one list of goals for Turkey to reach within six to eight months before starting negotiations and a second list of other items that could slow the process down if Turkey did not make progress toward achieving them. Swartbol noted that the EU would ensure that negotiations would tackle the tough issues identified in the impact statement.

17. (C/NF) De Gooijer cautioned that Turkey should concentrate on the yes and the date parts of the recommendation and not be overly-concerned by the blah-blah-blah that follows it where the Council may list must-do items for the Turks.

#### EU AND DUTCH POLITICS: MORE FOR THAN AGAINST

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18. (C/NF) Swartbol cited France, Austria, Denmark (where the Prime Minister is the problem) and the Netherlands as still needing more work on the domestic front. While the Dutch, in the Presidency role, will strive for objectivity in public and eschew overt statements about what Dutch preferences or strategies, de Gooijer said to watch for Dutch signals. He recalled PM Balkenende's July 21 Strasbourg Parliament speech, where he rejected prejudice against Islam as a basis for opposing Turkey. De Gooijer allowed how he had written, championed, and insured inclusion of the following lines, which he proudly reported received warm applause that day: We must not allow ourselves to be guided by fear, for example, of Islam. Raising barriers to any particular religion does not fit in with Europe's shared values. Our opposition should be directed not against religions but against people and groups misusing their religion to get their way by force.

19. (C/NF) Swartbol said that potential divisions within the Dutch government had largely been resolved, thanks in part to Verheugen's (quiet) briefing of the Dutch cabinet. De Gooijer agreed that the Dutch government will ultimately support accession; Pollman was not so sure. Both feel that momentum toward Yes is lacking. Pollman alerted us that the constituents of some cabinet ministers could be tending negative, meaning the ministers would have to convince them otherwise or vote and anger the base. De Gooijer and Pollman predicted any opponents will eventually modify positions enough to be able to wag their fingers and say, We have serious problems with this and if it does not work out, well, we told you so.

#### THE TIMING OF THE WRITING OF THE REPORT

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10. (C/NF) De Gooijer (please protect) confirmed that Commission officers have been on the ground in Turkey in July surveying conditions across the full matrix of issues. The various arms of the Commission will complete individual parts of the report during August and give it to Verheugen, who will collate the parts and circulate a complete draft in early September. He will present a final draft to the full Commission on October 6. The Commission will present it to the Council thereafter, by November.

11. (C/NF) Both Swartbol and de Gooijer said that the Dutch (as President) and the Commission were trying to stay in sync on the report, meaning that the Dutch will have large influence over all aspects of it. De Gooijer added that the Commission is loathe to get out in front of the Presidency on any issue, especially one like this. Swartbol, while cautioning that the Dutch did not hold the pen, was also confident that the report would not hold any surprises for the presidency. (Note: Ambassador Sobel stressed that it should not hold any surprises for us or Turkey either, and pressed Swartbol to ensure that the process was as transparent as possible.)

#### WILD CARD CYPRUS

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12. (C/NF) Pollman suggested the EU might give the GoC, as an EU Member State, its due on the Cyprus trade and financial support issues while then expecting Papadopoulos to relent on Turkey. However, EU partners do not really engage on Cyprus since only the UK has any real interest in the island, she said, adding, What does Cyprus have these days, besides the Turkey card? And this means the EU has but little leverage over Cyprus; Pollman hoped that powers outside the EU will pressure Papadopoulos to support Turkish accession, using

whatever psychological, political, or other means that might work.

COMMENT

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113. (C/NF) The Dutch governing elite want a Yes for Turkey and they seem confident that they can bring the nation as well as the rest of the EU along. There is finesse at the top, as seen in de Gooijer's handling of the Islam question for PM Balkenende. There are many variables open and many forces at work, but the trends -- at least for now -- seem to be moving in the right direction.  
SOBEL